

The Budget—Mr. Dufresne

Mr. Lesage: I was just going to ask—

Mr. Dufresne: Mr. Speaker, I would like to proceed with my speech without interruption, and I ask the minister if he would kindly be seated.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. minister wishes to put a question to the hon. member for Quebec West who, at the same time, says that he wants to proceed with his speech without being interrupted. So!

Mr. Lesage: It is because he had forgotten—

Mr. Dufresne: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be compelled to reply to a lot of interruptions.

Mr. Lapointe: Where were you at the time of the by-election in Beauce?

Mr. Dufresne: Mr. Speaker, I want to assert before all Canada that the Liberal party, which boasts of administering the federal budget so as to give the people all kinds of social legislation from which it benefits, is shamelessly misleading the Canadian people.

True, it is paying family allowances, distributing old age pensions; it is contributing by grants to public health and education; all that is true. But what is even truer and what the people should know, is that the federal Liberal government is being generous with money that belongs to the provinces, money it has taken away from them by means which the rules of the house do not permit me to qualify; money which it refuses to hand back, in spite of the most solemn promises which are today being disregarded in the same way that Hitler in 1939 disregarded his agreements with Poland. To sum up, it is scattering with lavishness money which does not belong to the federal government but which, to use the expression of Liberal senator Jacob Nicol, has been stolen from the provinces.

The proof, Mr. Speaker, that such social legislation has no other purpose than to secure the votes and the confidence of the Canadian people is that during all the elections that have been held since the end of the war, the attention of the people and of the electors has been deliberately turned away from the actual problems of an administration which is gradually upsetting our economic stability. The only matters discussed have been those that can provide certain classes of society with financial advantages which, I repeat, are made possible by the money

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taken away from the provinces and which they refuse to give back to them. Today, as a result of an inconsistent administration, that same government, responsible for one of the worst unemployment situations which our country has known, is cynical enough to refuse to live up to its responsibilities. When in 1945 unemployment insurance benefits were established—and the worker is entitled to those benefits because he is sharing the cost with his employer—the federal government undertook to assume responsibility for the consequences which could result from an unemployment situation such as we are facing today.

While at this very moment, more than 700,000 Canadians are being crushed by the weight of their misery and cannot find employment, while those unemployed are growing restless and are crying for work to provide for their needs and for those of their family, we are witnessing here, Mr. Speaker, a sad and shameful performance.

We see the Liberal government refusing to assume the responsibility to which it has committed itself; it is playing football in a brazen, daring style, thereby adding to the grief and misery of the unemployed.

Now that more than ever the time is ripe to do something to prevent Canadians from going hungry, our strong protests are being laughed at. What is being done by those who truly have a sense of honour and who have at heart the welfare of the Canadian people?

While in thousands of homes people are going hungry, while poverty and hardship have invaded those homes, while in those same homes small children are suffering from the lack of basic necessities and are undernourished, while we are demanding for them not abundance but at least something to prevent them from starving to death, we are given the pathetic performance of Liberal members—most of them elected by those unfortunate unemployed—laughing at our demands. Mr. Speaker, they are showing by their attitude towards the unemployed an utter contempt which will be remembered, I am sure, at the next general election.

The Liberal government, now that it must face the sad and shameful fact of unemployment in a country having unlimited resources like ours, refuses, I repeat, to recognize its responsibilities. It wants others to share that burden to such an extent that they will be unable to agree, so that once